

The Renaissance

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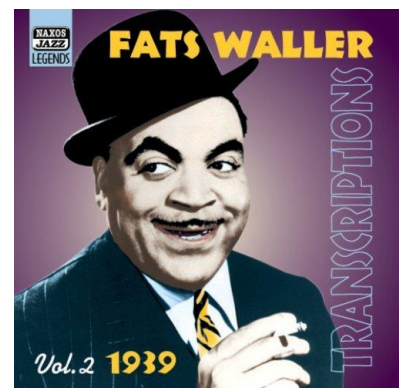
Fats Waller

Fats Waller (born Thomas Wright Waller on May 21, 1904 – December 15, 1943) was an American jazz pianist, organist, composer and comedic entertainer. A skilled pianist -- widely recognized as a master of stride piano -- Waller was one of the most popular performers of his era, finding critical and commercial success in his homeland and in Europe. Waller was also a prolific songwriter, with many songs he wrote or co-wrote still known to modern audiences, such as "Honeysuckle Rose," "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "Squeeze Me." Fellow pianist and composer Oscar Levant dubbed Waller "the black Horowitz" in a favorable comparison to Russian pianist Vladimir Horowitz. A prolific composer of novelty swing tunes in the 1920s and 30s, Waller sold many of his compositions for relatively small sums, and as they became hits, other songwriters had already claimed them as their own. Thus many standards are alternatively, controversially attributed to Waller.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fats_Waller

Ain't Misbehavin' At the Renaissance April 16, 2009 7:00 PM

The show brings to life the whole world that Fats Waller lived in and largely represented: Harlem in the 30s - the Golden Age of places like The Cotton Club and the Savoy Ballroom, the honky-tonk dives along Lenox Avenue, of rent parties, of stride piano players and the new beat, swing. In a deceptively simple but dazzling set that suggests all at once a Harlem nightclub stage, a Harlem street, a 30s radio and a giant jukebox, *Ain't Misbehavin'* evokes a whole sense of jazz worlds - uptown and downtown, raffish and posh, funny and startlingly beautiful.





Starring Ruben Studdard

Partway through the second American Idol in early 2003, guest judge Gladys Knight christened corpulent crooner Ruben Studdard a "velvet teddy bear," a nod to his smooth, Luther Vandross-styled voice and his Barry White-sized girth. It was a nickname that stuck, since it captured the persona of the 25-year-old Birmingham, AL, native who had unexpectedly become the front-runner in the national televised talent show. Surrounded by skinny kids emulating Kelly Clarkson and Justin Guarini, the two singers who walked away with the debut American Idol in 2002, Studdard stood out with his massive frame, winning smile, easygoing style, mellow voice, and trademark jerseys bearing the number 205, the area code of his hometown.

That hometown looms large in the background of Ruben. The son of two teachers, Studdard was born in Birmingham on July 14, 1978. As a child, he sang at his parents' Baptist church, but it wasn't until college that he became serious about music. Abandoning a promising career in football that would lead to an athletic scholarship at Alabama A&M University, he decided to switch his major and study voice at the school, graduating with a degree in 2000.

He started his professional career as a singer for Just a Few Cats, a Birmingham-based jazz and soul band. During 2002, Ruben joined one of the group's backup singers at an audition for the second American Idol, making the first round of cuts at his local audition, then winning himself a slot on the national television program.



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Source: <http://music.aol.com/artist/ruben-studdard/biography/1516787>